



THE  
LESSONS OF  
**ANNE HALE**

BY ALEX KINGSBURY



IN 1938, AN IDEALISTIC YOUNG TEACHER  
JOINED THE COMMUNIST PARTY. DURING  
THE RED SCARE OF THE 1950S, THAT PAST  
MADE HER AN FBI TARGET. HER LIFE  
WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME.

# Wayland Town Crier

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## Defense Alert is Scheduled June 14

W. A. Johnson, Wayland Director of Civil Defense Committee, said that a defense alert will be held on June 14, 1964, at 10:00 a.m. in the auditorium of the Wayland High School. The alert is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on June 14, 1964, at the Wayland High School auditorium. The alert is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on June 14, 1964, at the Wayland High School auditorium.

## Public Hearing on Hale Case is Scheduled for June 8; School Committee Makes Charges



FORWARD BOARD in Wayland has been Anne Hale, in sitting into the committee, recently issued this decision.

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## Mystery Incident in Army Anti-Abuse

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## Statements by Committee and Miss Hale

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## Little and Perry League

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## Memorial Day Service Held at Ocklawton

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"Rumor and gossip have had a field day," read an editorial in the *Wayland Town Crier* during Anne Hale's ordeal. "Excited by the discovery of a former Communist in town, they have jumped to the conclusion that there must be others."

FOR ANNE HALE, the sight of 700 of her neighbors packed shoulder to shoulder in the Wayland High School auditorium must have felt overwhelming. As the middle-aged second-grade teacher sat in front of the crowd, facing her judges and jury on the School Committee, the long odds against her that June evening in 1954—at the height of McCarthyism—would have come into sharp relief.

Hale could have avoided this public spectacle and quietly resigned from the job she'd held for six years in a profession she'd loved for decades. Instead, she chose to take a public stand. In a letter addressed to the parents of her students, she had declared, "I think it will do less harm to the children to see me standing up for what I believe to be true, than to see me run away." Anne Hale was about to find out if the town of Wayland agreed with that conclusion.

Yes, she admitted, she had once been a member of the Communist Party, but that was years ago. No, she said, she did not believe in the overthrow of the government by force and violence, the standard charge against suspected communists. Furthermore, Hale said, she "believed in government by the majority, in the Bill of Rights, and in the protection of the rights of minorities."

For most Americans, the Red Scare of the late 1940s and 1950s was brief and frenzied and far away—when the klieg lights of Congress shone on well-known defendants like Lucille Ball, Leonard Bernstein, W.E.B. DuBois, and Dalton Trumbo while other high-profile citizens, such as Walt Disney and then Screen Actors Guild president Ronald Reagan, named people they believed to be communists. But the Red Scare was much more than powerful people accusing one another of what amounted to treason.

"Show trials," as critics called them, were held in cities and towns, offices and churches, union halls and military barracks, schools and jails. The goal of these proceedings was the same as the congressional hearings run by Senator Joseph McCarthy and others: to test the loyalty of Americans who'd been accused of suspicious affiliations. Thousands lost their jobs, many were jailed. Under cover of anonymity, thousands of Americans informed on one another out of fear or malice. Books were burned. Subpoenas were served in the middle of the night. Red hunters—officials and private citizens searching for subversives—lied and forged evidence. Police and the FBI followed orders, sometimes against their better judgment. And officials who fueled the hysteria were rewarded with reelection. John F. Kennedy, the only Democrat not to vote for McCarthy's censure by the US Senate in December 1954, explained: "Hell, half my voters in Massachusetts look on McCarthy as a hero."

This is the America an idealistic Anne Hale found herself living in—a country locked in a Cold War with the Soviet Union and consumed with fears of traitors in its midst. It was a time when Hale's own government would trample the rights of US citizens in the name of security and when a vast network of secret FBI informers could single out anyone, including a grade school teacher

in small-town Massachusetts, for scrutiny and even persecution.

IN THE EARLY 1950s, Anne Hale lived alone in a chaotic small Cape on Plain Road. She had a remarkable facility with children, and, for a time, that was enough to earn her Wayland's affection. Hale taught, she baby-sat, she ran a summer camp of sorts out of her house. She loved to play card games and had an impish sense of humor—one of her favorite gags was to wait until kids had a mouth full of milk or applesauce and then make them laugh until it ran out their nose. "Soda-water fountain!" she'd exclaim, wiping away the dribble.

Hale hadn't just stumbled into teaching; it was a calling. Her father, Matthew Hale, a confidant of Teddy Roosevelt, had tutored the president's children in the White House. An ardent backer of Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party, he had instilled in his own children a passion for progressive causes. When Anne once asked her father to define a successful person, he said it was one who helps the "broadest group of people to the utmost of his ability."

Determined to teach, Anne attended Radcliffe during the late 1920s, when the country's political culture was swirling with new and vibrant currents. She studied in Denmark as the Depression ravaged America, and when she returned, she developed a close relationship with a radical Radcliffe classmate. Her brother Matthew, alarmed by both the political and the personal aspects of the connection, insisted Anne and the classmate part ways. After graduation in 1930, Anne moved to Manhattan and began teaching at the elite all-girls Chapin School on the Upper East Side. She joined the local teachers' union and, later, the Communist Party, whose ideas for reforming education, ending racial segregation in housing, and furthering women's rights appealed to her.

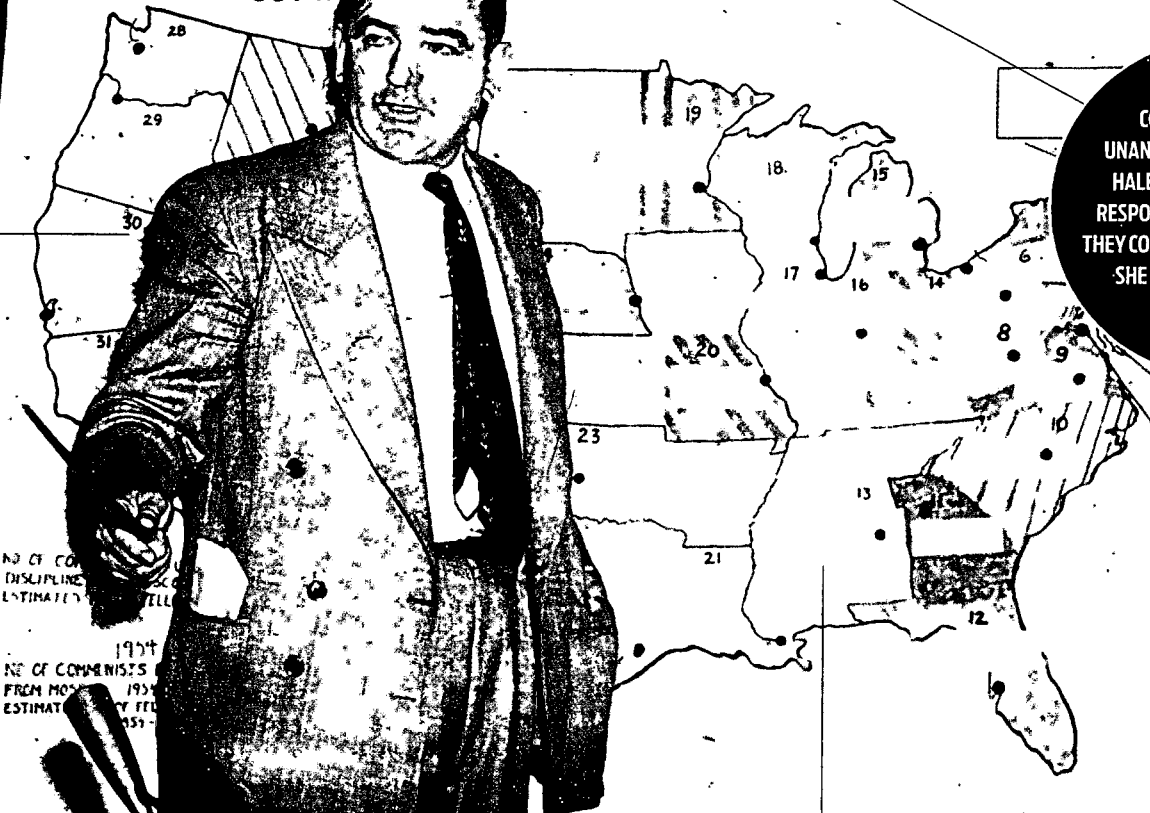
Six years after joining the party, Hale came to the attention of the FBI, though the bureau's initial interest would be short-lived. In 1944, the 35-year-old ran for the position of literary director of a local Communist Party chapter, only to lose to another member. Unbeknownst to Hale, informants from the meeting reported back to the FBI, and the bureau opened a file on her as a potential subversive.

The FBI investigation relied on many informants whose names are not known. But some are, including Mrs. J. Tier, Hale's neighbor, who volunteered that "there was a colored lady who appeared to be advanced educationally, residing with Miss Hale at least part time." Rudolph Kearn, another neighbor, said he'd never seen any subversive literature in her trash.

The same report notes that Hale's brother worked as an attorney for the state's War Production Board, and that was enough for the FBI to open a separate investigation into him. (Despite being far more politically conservative than his sister, Matthew Hale would eventually lose his job as a result of her activities.)

In the political climate of 1944, Anne Hale didn't seem like much of a threat. Her case was dropped a few months after it was opened, "in view of the fact that this subject is not believed potentially dangerous to the internal security of the United States," as the FBI file put it. But the political winds were soon to shift.

# COMMUNIST PARTY ORGANIZATION U.S.A-FEB. 9, 1950



NO. OF COMMUNIST DISCIPLINING ESTIMATED BY TELL

1954  
NO. OF COMMUNISTS FROM MAY 1951 TO FEB. 1951

MCCARTHY PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

In 1946, Republicans swept both houses of Congress for the first time in a generation, and they were fired up. President Harry Truman, they charged, was soft on communism. Truman's response was to reorient the government to tackle the issue head-on. As the military and State Department worked to contain communism abroad, Truman unleashed the FBI on potential domestic subversives and Director J. Edgar Hoover built up a secret database on Americans: the Security Index.

Over time, Anne Hale became less active in the Communist Party. After the war, she'd accepted a teaching post at the Shady Hill elementary school in Cambridge, promptly joining the local chapter. In 1948, she moved on to a job teaching second grade in Wayland (she would relocate to town in 1951), and the party ceased to be her outlet for activism. She stopped paying party dues and joined the League of Women Voters. "I became more and more eager about my teaching," she later explained, "and spent more time on that, and in working for the children through the home and community as well as the school."

Then on March 5, 1948, an informant told the FBI that Hale had purchased two copies of a Pete Seeger songbook. Simple acts like that were enough to land her back on Hoover's Security Index.

**B**EFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR, Wayland was a typical small, conservative New England town of about 3,500 residents. Farms dotted the north side, the village of Cochituate nestled to the south. But rapid change soon followed. By 1954, the town's population had swelled to 7,000. Taxes had increased, dirt roads had been paved, and schools quickly constructed. As in suburbs elsewhere during the baby boom, children became a major focus, and Anne Hale's deft hand at educating them endeared her to parents.

But the residents of Wayland were also on the lookout for subversives. On May 23, 1951, the FBI received an unsolicited letter from May A. Blake, the state chairwoman of the National Defense Committee of the Daughters of the Ameri-

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO SUSPEND HALE WITHOUT PAY. HALE RESPONDED WITH A REQUEST THEY COULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED: SHE ASKED FOR A PUBLIC HEARING.

can Revolution. Hale "has for a long time boasted of her anti-American influence over pupils, their parents, and a large group, especially in the Unitarian Church, in which she sings," Blake noted ominously. "She is of an old American-Christian family, but condemns everything American and Christian." Interviewed by an FBI agent about these allegations, Blake could offer no evidence to substantiate her charges. But she was right about Hale's lineage. Nathan Hale, a Revolutionary War soldier, was an ancestor, though not the same Nathan Hale who said, "I

only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." It could not have been lost on Blake that Hale had the family pedigree to join the fiercely conservative DAR.

Hale had apparently confided some of her troubles to Margaret Crane, who she knew as a fellow teacher at Shady Hill. But in 1953, afraid of being associated with a subversive, Crane went to the bureau to protect her own name. She told an agent that Hale was "inclined to be psychopathic and was subject to temper tantrums." Crane didn't know Hale to be a communist but offered several reasons for suspicion, including that she was willing to live in slums and associate with "persons in these areas." Did Crane, the agent asked, know any of Hale's friends who might be worthy of bureau attention? Indeed she did; she rattled off several names.

Despite these allegations, FBI agents in Boston did not deem Hale a true threat, and again asked Hoover to cancel the investigation. Instead, they were told to take action.

Agents informed the chairman of the Wayland School Committee, Cornelius Maguire, that a subversive was lurking in his schools' midst. On September 28, 1953, Special Agent Jeremiah J. Healy Jr. drove to Maguire's home to brief him more fully on the case, facts that Maguire promised both to keep confidential and investigate further, though he cautioned it might be difficult to remove a tenured teacher.

A few months later, with Senator McCarthy's committee hearings increasingly dominating headlines, Hale was called to testify at an executive session of the Special Commission to Study and Investigate Communism and Subversive Activities and Related Matters in the Commonwealth, where she acknowledged past membership in the party. Though it was designated a closed proceeding, two police officers later briefed the FBI on her testimony. The commission's counsel even gave the bureau a transcript.

## Wayland Teacher's Hearing Tonight

WAYLAND, June 11—Suspended teacher Anne Hale Jr. will stand before the witness stand tonight at 7:30 when School Committee men will continue the hearing to determine whether her Communist affiliation shall be reason for dismissal.

The hearing was held on Tuesday and Wednesday night's but day and Wednesday night to

Meanwhile, the Wayland School Committee called Hale to an executive session to discuss her loyalty to the United States. Hale read a three-page statement explaining her past membership and declaring that she'd done nothing illegal. "During my six years as a teacher, three of them as a citizen [of Wayland] also," she told the committee, "I have been able to contribute something to the welfare of the Town, and I know that for me they have been the happiest and more rewarding years of my life so far." Every morning, Hale pointed out, she led her class in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. "This is no idle pledge for me," she told them.

The committee voted unanimously to suspend her without pay. Hale responded with a request they'd likely not expected: She asked for a public hearing.

**H**ALE'S FIRST LAWYER, Endicott Peabody, who would go on to be elected governor of Massachusetts in 1962, was then a young liberal attorney running for his first political office. Peabody, though initially excited by the chance to expose the Red Scare for preying on the powerless and the harmless, would admit in his diary that representing Hale could hurt his prospects. With the start of the hearings only days away, Peabody quit the case. Oliver Allen, an attorney with the ACLU, took over, advising Hale to remain silent, a strategy that would both anguish her supporters and outrage the audience in the Wayland auditorium.

By all accounts, the town ran an orderly inquiry, but it was a marathon of eight public hearings over three weeks. Each of the hearings lasted several hours. It was said later that the committee deliberately made them as long and as boring as possible to curb public interest. It didn't work.

"Rumor and gossip have had a field day," read an editorial in the *Wayland Town Crier*. "Excited by the discovery of a former Communist in Town, they have jumped to the conclusion that there must be others." Nervous residents told police that a local book club's reading list included *The Communist Manifesto*. Some worried that houses with red window shutters were relaying coded Soviet messages. (Up the road in Belmont, the John Birch Society would later warn that water fluoridation was a communist plot.) Citizens reported a suspicious gathering of cars that turned out to be for a regular bridge game. How many other communists were in their midst? Rumors reached as high as 63.

Yet Hale did have public supporters, including at her church. The Rev. Raymond Manker of the First Parish Church in Wayland told the press he would give Hale a character reference and welcome any worshipers regardless of their political beliefs. She had other backers in the community, but to support a subversive openly was to invite suspicion. People feared for their jobs, and attendance at First Parish Church plummeted. One Sunday, just three parishioners showed up.

As Hale faced the committee, Joe McCarthy was at the zenith of his crusade. Tens of millions were riveted to televised hearings as the Wisconsin senator interrogated US Army personnel, setting audience records for the new medium. School Committee members joked that there was "competition from Washington" for attention during the Hale proceedings. Meanwhile, Wayland was taking part in nuclear attack drills, and an anti-aircraft missile battery was being built on the north side of town, "probably the first military installation in Wayland since the time of King Philip's War," according to the *Town Crier*. The Cold War had come to town.

Such was the charged atmosphere that surrounded Hale and the three-member School Committee—William Waldron, Harvey Newton, and Cornelius Maguire. After the eighth hearing, they voted 2-1 to dismiss Hale from the school. Waldron dissented, saying that it was impossible to judge what Hale actually believed, but Newton and Maguire judged her unfit for teaching. "The mind of a child is particularly



receptive," the two men wrote. "It is important for children, even in the lower grades, to be taught by teachers imbued with our American ideas of democracy, loyalty, love of country, and respect for our tradition of freedom."

**B**Y THE SUMMER OF 1954, Anne Hale was out of a job and out of money. She moved into the basement of her Wayland house on Plain Road, thinking she'd rent out the upstairs. But she had been blacklisted as a landlord by many employers in the area. She took a night job cleaning dog kennels at the MSPCA's Angell Memorial Hospital in Boston, but that ended in November when her boss, Dr. Eric Hansen, contacted the FBI. He said a friend in the CIA had warned him that there was a subversive on the staff. Was it true? Hale was fired immediately.

The manager of the Green Shoe factory in the South End took pity on her and offered her a job, but she would

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover calls the US Communist Party a "Fifth Column" whose "goal is the overthrow of our government" during testimony in March 1947 before the House Un-American Activities Committee in Washington.

## SUSPENDED TEACHER EXPLAINS HER BELIEFS

Miss Anne P. Hale, Jr., Wayland school teacher who was suspended last month for alleged Communist activity, made public yesterday a letter to Wayland citizens.

Explaining her "beliefs," Miss Hale said that "they have certainly not affected my teaching of such skills as reading and arithmetic."

The 46-year-old teacher said she had worked in many or-

a fairer distribution of wealth through some form of planned economy will eventually secure maximum production at the end of depression and war. Miss Hale, who lives on Plain road, Wayland, said she resigned from the Communist party because "I was becoming increasingly absorbed by my teaching, and also because I was becoming more interested in the community of Wayland."



ONE DAY STATE POLICE  
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commission, and with nothing to lose, Hale was bold. The commission's sole purpose, she said, was "punishment and destruction." She accused its members of using "permanent unemployment as a club to force people to become informers." She raged at her dismissal from the animal hospital, accusing the government of stooping to "protecting dogs and cats" from indoctrination.

Hale told the commission the ordeal had made her "twice as active" in preventing further damage "to our Constitution and to our inherent rights to freedom." She was more determined to give "help to the victims of this and other repressive agencies." In seeking to punish her for not being sufficiently "American," the government had only turned her into a fiercer critic.

**B**Y 1957, THE US SUPREME COURT had ruled that the prosecutions Hale and others endured were unconstitutional. Americans were entitled to hold their own political beliefs and associate with whom they chose, the court found. Even though J. Edgar Hoover referred to the day of the court's decision as "Red Monday," the public phase of the Red Scare was coming to a close.

But American citizens hadn't finished informing on Anne Hale, even if only to say she was doing nothing suspicious. At one point, she went to Vermont to look after the children of Roland Boyden, then the dean of Marlboro College, and informants reported to the FBI that she didn't appear to be doing anything subversive. From there she went to work with children at the Massachusetts state hospital for the mentally disabled, then to jobs at four more private schools and hospitals in New York and Rhode Island. All the while, informants reported her actions and whereabouts to the FBI. (The last report wouldn't appear until November 14, 1962, 18 years, 1 month, and 24 days after the first.)

To make ends meet between jobs, Hale had set up a home newspaper clipping service—clients paid her to cut out articles on certain topics. Later in life, she continued the practice to follow her own interests. "She was just keeping an eye on the news every day in the hopes that causes she cared about would advance, that things would get better," recalls her niece Mary Few, 70, who lives in Cambridge.

In 1964, a *Globe* reporter's unpublished notes indicate that Hale suffered a heart attack and had lost considerable weight. Under doctor's orders, she was "tiptoeing along." In 1968, she returned to Wayland after landing a job in the Wellesley public schools. But before she could pick up the chalk, she fell gravely ill. Her niece remembers Hale dropping words in the middle of sentences and losing the ability to read. By October of that year, at age 60, Anne Hale was dead from a brain tumor.

The chance to teach public school again, a friend recalled, would have been "her vindication." Over the decades, Hale had never lost the devotion to her students. Back in 1954, when the Wayland School Committee had suspended her in advance of the public hearings, she'd had only one request: to say goodbye to her second-graders. The committee refused.

It was a slight that angered her until her death. In fact, according to relatives, it was the only regret she admitted to during her years of persecution. Unable to tell her students in person, she wrote them a letter, mailing a copy to each family.

*Dear Children,*

*Your family will tell you that different people have different ideas about how the country should be run. I have been working for a long time in the best way I knew to make sure that the 'liberty and justice for all' of which we speak every morning is always with us and that it will grow better.*

*Those who don't agree with me may say harsh things.*

*Just remember these things, which I am sure you know—I love my country and I love you. ■*

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HOOPER PHOTOGRAPH FROM AP

need to live in Boston. Since landlords wouldn't rent to her, Hale did what many desperate people do: She took up with the only people who would associate with her—other persecuted Americans.

Hale moved into 33-35 Fayston Street in Grove Hall, a home owned by Otis Hood, a sculptor and head of the Communist Party of Massachusetts. Hood lived there with his wife and family, and he turned the attic room over to persecuted people with nowhere else to go, recalls daughter Nancy Hood, 69, who now lives in Bristol, Rhode Island. Anne Hale became part of their family.

Otis Hood rented the second floor of his house to the family of Daniel Boone Schirmer, who had gone underground because of his party membership. Joe Schirmer, Daniel's son, now living in Wisconsin, says that life at Fayston Street meant constant attention from the government. One day the Boston Police came to the house and seized subversive books and—unsure where to place the dangerous materials—locked them in a cell at the police station in Roxbury.

On other occasions, the FBI would follow Schirmer's mother, Peggy, when her husband was out of town. "She could generally spot them pretty easily," he recalls. Once, when agents were following her home from work, she turned and asked them to help her carry her groceries. They were too stunned to refuse.

Nancy Hood's 73-year-old sister, Jane, a retired sociology professor living in New Mexico, has traumatic memories. "I was shoved up against a lamp post and beat over the head with rolled-up magazines by other kids who called us dirty Jew commies," Jane says. Rocks were thrown through the windows. "I wasn't old enough to understand what communism was, but I was old enough to understand fear," Nancy adds, "to understand that we were being persecuted."

But Hale was able to make the situation a little better. Ever the child-minder, she looked after the kids in the house, playing "soda-water fountain" at meals. She read them *Little House on the Prairie*; she sang songs, played cards, and taught the kids to throw butter balls onto the ceiling. "In the midst of everything," Nancy says, "Anne's presence was really positive in our household."

Hale also sent sympathy cards to men and women in prison for loyalty offenses. Each card was recorded by the FBI. Summoned again before the state

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